

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

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AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 20041

LIMDIS

BEIRUT PASS USINT BAGHDAD

DEPT PASS USINT CAIRO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:PFOR, XG, US, IZ

SUBJECT: IRAQ'S RELATIONS WITH THE WEST AND ITS NEIGHBORS

REF: STATE 139801

1. SUMMARY: JULY 20 ISSUE OF LE FIGARO AND JULY 21 ISSUE OF LE MONDE CARRY REPORTS FROM SPECIAL CORRESPONDENTS DESJARDINS AND ROULEAU REPORTING STATEMENTS BY IRAQI VICE PRESIDENT SADDAM HUSSEIN OF A DESIRE FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH US AND UK AND WITH IRAN AND KUWAIT. QUAI SOURCES AGREE THAT IRAQ LOOKING FOR DIVERSIFICATION IN ITS EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND LESSENING OF SOVIET ROLE. GOF WOULD PROBABLY FAVOR ANY STEPS WE MIGHT TAKE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH IRAQ. END SUMMARY.

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2. THIERRY DESJARDINS, LE FIGARO'S MIDDLE EAST EXPORT, REPORTS IN JULY 20 ISSUE ON HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT PRESS CONFERENCE BY IRAQI VICE-PRESIDENT SADDAM HUSSEIN, STRESSING HUSSEIN'S INTEREST IN IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH WEST.

DESJARDINS WHO ATTENDED CONFERENCE REPORTS THAT HUSSEIN SEEMED SURE OF HIMSELF AND RESOLVED TO CARRY ON AND INTENSIFY POLICIES OF RECENT MONTHS. DESJARDINS QUOTES HUSSEIN HAS HAVING SAID THAT HE WAS READY TO HAVE RELATIONS WITH US AND ENGLAND IF THESE COUNTRIES "CHANGED THEIR ATTITUDE". IRAQ, HE ADDED, WAS READY TO ESTABLISH A REAL DIALOGUE WITH IRAN WITHOUT MEDIATOR OR PRECONDITION, IF TEHRAN RENOUNCED ITS "EXPANSIONIST AIMS" AND RECOGNIZED IRAQ'S SOVEREIGNTY. IRAQ, HE SAID, ALSO DESIRED AMICAL RELATIONS WITH KUWAIT AND WOULD NEVER USE ARMS AGAINST AN ARAB COUNTRY NO MATTER WHAT ITS REGIME. DESJARDINS REPORTS THAT HUSSEIN IN COMMENTING ON RELATIONS WITH SOVIETS SAID THAT WHILE USSR WAS GREAT FRIEND, IRAQ, UNLIKE OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES, DID NOT EXPECT USSR TO DO ITS WORK FOR IT OR TO SAVE IT.

3. ERIC ROULEAU OF LE MONDE WHO ALSO RECENTLY VISITED BAGHDAD HAS CONFIRMED TO EMBOFF ACCURACY OF DESJARDIN'S REPORT. ROULEAU, WHO HAD LONG INTERVIEW WITH SADDAM HUSSEIN, IS CONVINCED THAT HE IS SERIOUS IN SEEKING IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS WITH WEST, THOUGH THERE ARE LIMITS ON PACE AT WHICH IRAQI REGIME CAN GO. IN ARTICLE APPEARING JULY 21, ROULEAU QUOTES HUSSEIN AS SAYING THAT IRAQ WANTED "NEW RELATIONS BASED ON MUTUAL RESPECT AND COMMON INTERESTS" AND THAT IRAQ WISHED TO PURSUE NON-ALIGNED POLICY. S FOR RELATIONS WITH IRAN, HE QUOTES HUSSEIN AS SAYING THAT IRANIAN OCCUPATION OF ARAB ISLANDS IN GULF IS NOT AN "INSURMOUNT-ABLE" PROBLEM. IT COULD BE SETTLED BY NEGOTIATIONW CHICH LEAD EITHER TO EVACUATION OF THESE TERRITORIES OR TO AN AGREEMENT WHICH WOULD SATISFY ARAB PRINCIPALITIES CONCERNED. HE ADDED IRAQ COULD ALSO COME TO AN AGREEMENT ON ALL THE OTHER DISPUTES WHICH SEPARATE IT FROM ITS NEIGHBORS, IF THEY SHOW A DESIRE TO TAKE UP DIALOGUE AGAIN.

4. COMMENT: SINCE RECENT COUP ATTEMPT, FRENCH PRESS HAS BEEN FILLED WITH CONTRADICTIONARY REPORTING FROM BAGHDAD, ON ONE HAD SUGGESTING THAT BAATH-COMMUNIST PARTY AGREEMENT WAS EVIDENCE OF GROWING SOVIET INFLUENCE; ON OTHER, ALONG LINES OF DESJARDINS AND ROULEAU REPORTING. ACCORDING TO QUAI DIRECTOR
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MIDDLE EAST AFFAIRS DE COMMINES, GOF IS CONVINCED THAT THERE IS GROWING DESIRE WITHIN IRAQI REGIME FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH WEST AND THAT IRAQ, RATHER LIKE ALGERIA, SEEKS TO MAINTAIN DEGREE OF DISTANCE FROM BOTH MAJOR BLOCS AND TO PURSUE POLICY OF GREATER NON-ALIGNMENT. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT FRENCH WOULD WELCOME IMPROVEMENT IN US-IRAQI RELATIONS AS MEANS TO DIMINISH EXTREMIST TENDENCIES AND INCREASE WESTERN INFLUENCE IN BAGHDAD. FRENCH HAVE RELATIVELY PRIVILEGED POSITION AMONG

WESTERN COUNTRIES WITH RELATIONS WITH IRAQ AND MIGHT BE WILLING
TO ENCOURAGE IRAQIS TO IMPROVE THEIR RELATIONS WITH US, IF WE
FELT IT WAS USEFUL FOR THEM TO DO SO.
IRWIN

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED CAIRO.

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